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ST. LUKE'S VERSION OF THE DEATH OF JUDAS

In the *American Journal of Theology* for July, 1900, I discussed in some detail the two variant accounts of the death of Judas in the Gospels, with the object of finding out what was the historical nucleus of the divergent traditions, supposing, that is, that a sensible historical nucleus could be detected, after we had removed those strata of the tradition which could be identified as a folk-lore deposit. The immediate motive of the inquiry was the discovery, which I had made, that in the story of Aḥikar, one of the most widely diffused of popular tales in both Greek and Semitic circles, the villain of the piece disappears from public view in a manner which is identical with that assigned to Judas in the Acts of the Apostles, when we have introduced one slight and necessary correction to the current text: for just as in the story of Aḥikar, his treacherous son, Nadan, after his villainies have returned upon his own head, swells up like a bag and bursts, so in the Acts, when we correct the text so as to read, "And he swelled up and burst asunder," etc., we have a perfect parallel between the fate of the traitor of the New Testament and him of the Old Testament Apocrypha (using the word Apocrypha in a somewhat wider sense than would be allowed by the Council of Trent or the Thirty-Nine Articles). The reason for the correction lay in the supposition that it got rid of the unintelligible *πρηγὴς ἐγένετο* ("He fell flat" or "He fell headlong"), by a substitution of another expression, *πρηθείς*, of which traces could be found in the oldest of the outlying eastern versions. Moreover, when the correction was made (and it should be noted that it is not fair to describe it as a conjectural emendation), we could see the reason for the development of a number of striking legends concerning the death of the traitor, dating from the time of Papias and therefore almost coeval with the Acts, according to which Judas continued in the world a bloated and hateful form, who met his death at last by being crushed by a carriage which he could not pass, or some similar explanation. The emendation "he swelled up" was the co-ordinating link between the story of Aḥikar in pre-Christian times and the stories told by Papias and others in later Christian days. It was the co-ordinating factor in a mass of disconnected folk-lore.

Assuming the text to be thus restored to its original form by the substitution of *πρηθείς* for *πρηγὴς ἐγένετο*, it was natural to examine what meaning was originally intended by the substituted expression. In what sense did Judas "fall flat" or "fall headlong"? It was easy to see that the early Christian Fathers had tried to harmonize the new

expression with an account given in Matthew, according to which Judas did not "swell up and burst," but simply "hanged himself"; it is a variant tradition invented to get rid of the objectionable details in the original story, and an exact parallel can be found to it in the Aḥikar tradition where the sensitiveness of later editors obscured the force of the original melodrama. Harmonization, however, seldom retains its hold finally upon the reflecting mind; suspicion is aroused, and becomes matured into critical examination; the harmonized stories fall apart, and the duality of the tradition is once more disclosed.

When the alternative *πρηνής* had become established and its natural interpretation had become current in ecclesiastical circles, it was suggested by me that the words "falling prone" gave rise to a parallel with the crawling serpent in the first chapters of Genesis, and a number of legendary statements were collected, which identified Judas with a snake, and sometimes with a snake that burst asunder. This part of the argument was not as forcible or as clear as the first part, but it was not altogether deficient in the power of co-ordinating traditions which were known to have existed in various quarters.

The net result of the inquiry was to confirm suspicions, already current in many quarters, as to the historicity of the suicide of Judas.

At this point I left the matter, and I do not know of any serious contribution to the Judas problem, until quite recent times, when the whole question of the text in the Acts, and its interpretation, was reopened by Dr. Chase, the present bishop of Ely, in an article in the *Journal of Theological Studies* for January, 1912.

The article is headed, "On *πρηνής γενόμενος* in Acts 1:18." Its object is to show that there is no need to emend the passage as suggested by myself and others on the faith of the outlying versions or other considerations: for the word *πρηνής* does not mean, in this connection, the equivalent of the Latin *pronus*, but is itself a medical term denoting a disease, and implying a bodily state of *inflammation* or *turgescence*. The suggestion is a brilliant one; it removes the necessity for emendation of the text (which otherwise would seem to be demanded, for as Dr. Chase says, "How woefully feeble is the expression *πρηνής γενόμενος*, *having become prone!*"); and it gives us the prospect of finding St. Luke's hand in one more passage which had been suspected of interpolation.

On this hypothesis, the connection with the story of Papias concerning the death of Judas could, if required, be made directly from the text of the Acts: for *πρηνθής* and *πρηνής γενόμενος* are now to be regarded as strictly synonymous phrases.

Dr. Chase bases his interpretation, by which, as Harnack says, he has added a new word to the lexicon of the New Testament Greek; on the fact that the two verbs, *πίμπρημι*, "to burn," and *πρήθω*, "to swell out by blowing," coincide in the forms of their aorists *ἐπρησα* and *ἐπρήσθην*, and appear to have also coalesced in meaning. In medical language *πίμπρημι*, is used of swelling caused by inflammation, and Dr. Chase suggests that *πρηγής* is connected with the same root.

The question arises at once whether the word can be found in any of the medical writers in the sense required; and here the confirmation desired appears to be absent, for Dr. Chase admits that "in a cursory search, I have not discovered any instance of the adjective *πρηγής* in medical writers in the sense of 'swollen,' 'inflamed.'" This is a serious defect, but it is compensated for in several directions: first of all, by the demonstration that *πρηγής γενόμενος* is in St. Luke's manner, and we might almost say in his medical manner. The best instance by way of parallel is *γενόμενος σκοληκόβρωτος* in Acts 12:23; in the next place, it is noted that in Wisd. 4:19, the expression *ῥήξει αὐτοὺς ἀφώνους πρηγεῖς* is rendered in the Old Latin (and in the Armenian) by "disrumpet illos, *inflatos* sine voce." Such is, in the briefest statement, the hypothesis of Dr. Chase for the explanation of the perplexing expression in the first chapter of the Acts.

As we have intimated above, the argument has convinced Professor Harnack, who, in an article in *Theologische Literaturzeitung* for April 13, 1912, expresses his adherence to Dr. Chase's views and points out the important conclusions that follow from them: "Chase hat sich der Dienst erworben, ein neues griechisches Wort entdeckt zu haben—durch dieselbe Methode, nach der ein unsichtbarer Planet entdeckt worden ist."

Harnack concludes by saying that the account of Judas' death in the Acts is apparently an excerpt, which is based upon a previously existing legend. The legend was quite independent of the Matthean story, but may very well have been the underlying material for the Papias narrative. Dr. Preuschen took an opposite view to Professor Harnack; perhaps because he was not so thoroughly convinced of the Lukanity of the Acts.

In his recently published commentary on the Acts, he suggests that the Armenian version involves an original *πρησθείς* and not *πρηγής*; that there is no ground for translating *πρηγής* in the sense of "swollen up"; that in *Sap. Sal.* 4:17 we ought to translate the word "headlong," and regard the old Latin *inflatos* as under the influence of the Acts.

He even suggests that *πρηθείς* may have been the original word in this passage also!

My own opinion inclines strongly to the belief that Dr. Chase's explanation is the correct one. I do not in the least regard this as a contradiction of my theory that the whole incident is a folk-lore method of getting rid of the villain of the piece. The parallel with *Ahikar* stands just as clear as before, except that we have to allow for some modification of the already existing legend by Luke, in writing the matter up from a medical point of view. He has replaced fact to some extent by symptoms; but the result of the disease is the same.

Now let us point out one important matter that stands to some extent in connection with this incident incorporated by Luke.

It has been assumed (and it is part of a larger question) that the language of the incident in Acts is both medical and Lukan; it is medical and, therefore, Lukan; or, if we regard the Lukan authorship as sufficiently established, it is Lukan, and so probably medical. One of the forms of speech which occur in the argument is the Lukan use of *γενόμενος* in describing medical symptoms. Dr. Chase gives illustrations from Hippocrates, which may, perhaps, furnish a key to the style, but are not really necessary.

Now one of the most striking instances of the kind referred to, after *πρηγῆς γενόμενος* and *γενόμενος σκληρόβρωτος*, is the expression in Luke 22:43, *γενόμενος ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ*. If this is a medical term (and the whole passage has a medical look), then it is Lukan. In that case, we may dismiss the idea that the verses Luke 22:43, 44 are not genuine. They respond to the test for Lukanity which we have acquired, in such a way as to preclude doubt. They are included in double brackets by Westcott and Hort, as containing "important matter apparently derived from extraneous sources." We have, however, seen that they do not answer to the description of being extraneous. So the question is raised as to whether it is possible that the verses have been excised for dogmatic reasons. Can we identify a school of religious thought to which the words would have been obnoxious? and can we identify the source from which the omission was derived by those MSS which do not contain the verses? The answer to the first question is obvious; the verses as they stand are fatal to the position taken up by the Doketists. While they stand in the text, the Doketist position is scripturally untenable: for how would it be possible to regard, with the Doketists, the sufferings of Christ as an illusion, in the face of the agony and bloody sweat? Now Doketism is one of the oldest of heresies, and, while it lasted, one of the most active. It has left its mark on the Christian records, as for instance

in the fabricated Gospel of Peter, where our Lord appears "as not having any pain," and in the legends which describe how he escaped the cross and allowed someone else to be crucified in his stead (perhaps as his double). There is, therefore, no difficulty in divining what a Docketist would do with St. Luke and his testimony.

The other question relates to the MSS by whose testimony the omission is commonly justified. Leaving on one side those which merely suggest obelization, the group, upon which attention must be fixed, contains BRT and is supported by the Egyptian versions and some stray and scattered evidence. It is evidently an Alexandrian omission, and not a Western non-interpolation. The evidence is exactly described in the margin of the later Syriac in the words, "This section of the gospels is not found among the Alexandrians"; the value of the testimony being increased by the fact that the version in question was corrected at a convent a few miles outside Alexandria. It is Alexandrian Docketism (to bring our two lines of inquiry together) that is responsible for the omission. The Logos of the schools banished the suffering Christ of the Scriptures.

It would be easy to enlarge on this theme, by discussing the necessary Docketist elements in Alexandrian theology; but probably enough has been said. In view of the Lukanity of the verses, it will not be longer possible to maintain, with Dr. Hort, that there are no traces of heretical depravation of the Scriptures, nor, *inter alia*, that the text of Codex B is strictly neutral.

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THE FREER GOSPELS¹

Luke 10:1 add *και* before *ἐτέρους* | omit *δύο*¹ | omit *δύο*³ 2 *ουν* for *δὲ*¹ | tr. to *εκβαλη εργατας* 3 add *εγω* before *ἀποστέλλω* 4 *μηδε* for *μη*³ | *ασπασσθαι* for *ἀσπάσθηθε* 5 *οικειαν εισερχησθαι* for *εἰσέλθητε οἰκίαν* 6 tr. to *η εκει* | *επαναπανσῆται* for *ἐπαναπαῆσεται* 7 *εσθιοντες* for *ἔσθοντες* | omit *καὶ πίνοντες* | add *εστιν* after *αὐτοῦ* 8 *δεχονται* for *δέχωνται* 10 *εισερχησθαι* for *εἰσέλθητε* | *πλατιους* for *πλατείας* 11 *υμιν* first written for *ἡμῖν*: changed to *ημιν* by 1st hand | omit *ὕμων* 1st hand, supplied above by 2d hand | add *ημων* after *ποδας* | add *εφ υμας* after *ἡγγικεν* 13 *ουα* for *Οὐαί*¹ | *χορεζειν* for *Χοραζειν* | *βηθσαι*-

¹ A collation with the text of Westcott and Hort, begun in the July number and continued in October.